

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

September 13, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretaries Blinken and Yellen:

I write with serious concern about the growing relationship between Caracas and Beijing and call on the Biden Administration to ensure that no sanctions are lifted on the criminal Venezuelan narco-regime. I also urge the administration to publicly communicate that any decision by a Chinese entity to provide new funding for the Venezuelan regime will be met with U.S. sanctions.

As you are no doubt aware, Nicolás Maduro is currently in Beijing to meet with Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping in what will be the most senior level meeting between the two countries in five years. Nicolás Maduro is expected to request economic and development assistance in an effort to improve his ability to “win” the presidential election scheduled for next year. According to press reports, Maduro’s delegation also includes Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez and oil minister Pedro Tellechea to discuss “possible joint ventures between China and state-run Petroleos de Venezuela SA (PDVSA).” Furthermore, according to reports, Maduro is seeking debt repayment and obtain new credit lines for infrastructure to be built by People’s Republic of China (PRC) state owned enterprises.

From banning opposition political parties, to denying the outcome of the 2019 presidential elections, to ordering the murder and forced disappearance of thousands of Venezuelans in torture centers, including El Helicoide, Nicolás Maduro and his regime have ruthlessly consolidated their authoritarian grip on Venezuela since illegitimately assuming office in 2019. The regime’s political and economic mismanagement has caused the largest refugee crisis in the world, which has driven more than 7 million Venezuelans to flee their homeland. To make things worse, the narco-regime continues to fund terrorist organizations in neighboring Colombia as well as fomenting instability and serving as sponsors of a major international drug trafficking ring that contributes to the growing opioid epidemic in our country. Rolling back any sanctions that would benefit the Venezuelan regime, as well as on PDVSA, oil production, or refinement, or infusing Chinese cash into the Maduro regime is a direct threat against U.S. national security interests and the safety and wellbeing of our region. Doing so would open yet another door for China to increase economic and military influence in our hemisphere and undermine the prospects of a return to democratic order in Venezuela.

Because of the threat posed by the Maduro regime to both the United States and the Venezuelan people, Congress and successive administrations have imposed targeted sanctions on the Maduro regime and against those that seek to support it through the bipartisan *Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014* (P.L. 113-278), the *VERDAD Act of 2019* (P.L. 116-94), and successive executive orders. Specifically, Executive Order 13884 authorizes the President to impose sanctions on “any person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to have materially assisted, sponsored, or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or service to or in support of” the Maduro regime.

Officials and entities in the PRC must be informed that if they decide to assist Maduro in his ongoing repression against the Venezuelan people, they will be subject to U.S. sanctions. I urge you to ensure all sanctions against Venezuela remain in place, and publicly communicate the risks Chinese entities are undertaking by supporting the Maduro regime and, should these warnings go unheeded, be prepared to fully enforce sanctions against these entities.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator